



Drug Demand Reduction Quarterly Newsletter

Facts About Alcohol

April 2013



Special points of interest: The drug testing program is the single best deterrent against illegal drug use among Active Duty and Civilian members of the military. In addition to drug testing, our program provides outreach services to: family members, retirees, school-aged children, and Active Duty members. Please visit our office in the MDG: Bldg 46, Room 1261, if you have questions or would like to prevention and education materials. Our program is available for Commanders' Calls and community events both on and off base.



Alcohol is the most commonly used addictive substance in the United States- 17.6 million people, or one in every 12 adults, suffer from alcohol abuse or dependence along with several million more who engage in risky, binge drinking patterns that could lead to alcohol problems. More than half of all adults have a family history of alcoholism or problem drinking, and more than 7 million children live in a household where at least one parent is dependent on or has abused alcohol. Yet, for many people, the Facts About Alcohol and Alcoholism are not clear. Alcoholism has little to do with what kind of alcohol one drinks, how long one has been drinking, or even exactly how much alcohol one consumes. But it has a great deal to do with a person's uncontrollable need for alcohol. Most alcoholics can't just "use a little willpower" to stop drinking. The alcoholic is frequently in the grip of a powerful craving for alcohol, a need that can feel as strong as the need for food or water. While some people are able to recover without help, the majority of alcoholics need outside assistance to recover from their disease.

Facts About Alcohol: Alcohol abuse and alcoholism can affect all aspects of your life. Long-term alcohol use can cause serious health complications affecting virtually every organ in your body, including your brain. It can also damage your emotional stability, finances, career, and impact your family, friends and the people you work with. To get a better understanding of how devastating alcoholism is in our country, here are a few figures from the CDC:

- 79,000 deaths are annually attributed to excessive alcohol use
- Alcoholism is the 3rd leading lifestyle-related cause of death in the nation
- Up to 40% of all hospital beds in the United States (except for those being used by maternity and intensive care patients) are being used to treat health conditions that are related to alcohol consumption

Over time, excessive alcohol use, both in the form of heavy drinking or binge drinking, can lead to numerous health problems, chronic diseases, neurological impairments and social problems, including but not limited to:

- Dementia, stroke and neuropathy
- Cardiovascular problems, including myocardial infarction, cardiomyopathy, atrial fibrillation and hypertension
- Psychiatric problems, including depression, anxiety, and suicide
- Social problems, including unemployment, lost productivity, family problems, violence including child maltreatment, fights and homicide
- Unintentional injuries, such as motor-vehicle traffic crashes, falls, drowning, burns and firearm injuries.
- Increased risk for many kinds of cancers, including liver, mouth, throat, larynx (voice box) and esophagus
- Liver diseases, including fatty liver, alcoholic hepatitis, cirrhosis
- Alcohol abuse or dependence—alcoholism



The relationship between alcohol and crimes including domestic abuse and violence, underage drinking, robbery, assault and sexual assault is clearly documented.



FACT: Excessive drinking leads to criminal behavior: The US Department of Justice (DOJ) estimated that a majority of criminal offenders were under the influence of **alcohol alone** when they committed their **crimes**.

Common Signs and Symptoms of Alcohol Abuse : Alcohol abuse is a pattern of drinking that results in harm to one’s health, interpersonal relationships, or ability to work including:

- **Repeatedly Neglecting Responsibilities:** Because of drinking, repeatedly neglecting responsibilities at home, work, or school. For example, neglecting the children, performing poorly at work, poor or failing grades in school, or skipping out on work, school, personal or social commitments because you’re hung over.
- **Alcohol Use in Dangerous Situations:** The use of alcohol in situations where it can be physically dangerous, such as drinking and driving, drinking in a bad neighborhood, mixing alcohol with prescription medication against the advice of your doctor or operating machinery while drinking.
- **Legal Problems Due to Drinking:** If, due to drinking, you are experiencing repeated legal problems. For example, getting arrested for fights, drunk and disorderly conduct, domestic disputes, driving under the influence.
- **Continued Drinking Despite Relationship Problems:** Alcohol is causing or making problems worse in your relationships with your friends, family or spouse, and you continue to drink. For example, fighting with your family because they don’t like how you act when you drink or going out and drinking with your buddies even though you know your wife will be very upset.
- **Drinking to De-Stress:** Many drinking problems start when people use alcohol to relieve stress. Because alcohol is a sedative drug, over time, you will need more alcohol to have the same effect. Getting drunk after a very stressful day more often, for example, or reaching for a bottle after you have an argument with boss, a friend or your spouse more frequently.

Statistics showing correlation between alcohol and crime (from the [NCADD Fact Sheet Alcohol and Crime](#)):

- Among violent crimes, the offender is far more likely to have been drinking than under the influence of other drugs, with the exception of robberies, where other drugs are likely to have been used such as alcohol.
- Alcohol is more likely to be a factor in violence, where the attacker and the victim know each other. Two-thirds of victims who were attacked by an intimate (including a current or former spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend) reported that alcohol had been involved, and only 31% of victimizations by strangers are alcohol-related.
- Nearly 500,000 incidents between intimates involve offenders who have been drinking; in addition, 118,000 incidents of family violence (excluding spouses) involve alcohol, as do 744,000 incidents among acquaintances.
- 1.4 million incidents of alcohol-related violence are committed against strangers.



FACT: An estimated 32% of fatal car crashes involve an intoxicated driver or pedestrian. Drinking alcohol and driving simply do not go together. The human brain has to deal with many things and process countless data all the time. Alcohol affects attentiveness and one’s ability to make quick decisions on the road, react to changes in the environment and execute specific, often difficult maneuvers behind the wheel. When drinking alcohol, driving becomes dangerous – and is potentially lethal!

Drinking and Driving is a Hazardous Combination —Don’t Drink and Drive